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## Viewing cable 09BELGRADE480, SERBIA/BOSNIA: INZKO VISIT UNDERSCORES OBSTACLES

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- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09BELGRADE480	2009-06-04 16:34	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Belgrade

Appears in these articles:

<http://balkans.blog.lemonde.fr>  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BELGRADE 000480

SENSITIVE  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/04/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BK](#) [SR](#)  
SUBJECT: SERBIA/BOSNIA: INZKO VISIT UNDERSCORES OBSTACLES  
IN BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

REF: BELGRADE 34

Classified By: Deborah Mennuti, Political Chief; reasons 1.4 (b, d).

11. (U) This cable was cleared with Embassy Sarajevo.

#### Summary

12. (C) High Representative Inzko's visit to Belgrade in early May refocused current challenges in bilateral relations between Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In meetings with top Serbian officials, Inzko elicited Serbian support of Dayton and Bosnia's territorial integrity, as well as a promise by Serbia to strengthen Bosnia's central institutions. Meanwhile, disputes involving national boundaries and property succession remain unresolved and are unlikely to see progress absent leadership from Tadic himself. In our view, a Tadic visit to Sarajevo affirming support for Bosnia's state-level institutions would demonstrate that Tadic's rhetoric in support of Bosnia and Herzegovina is more than mere words. End Summary.

#### Inzko Seeks Belgrade's Cooperation

13. (SBU) High Representative Valentin Inzko paid his first official visit to Belgrade on May 5 and received assurances from top Serbian officials that Belgrade would continue to support Bosnia's territorial integrity and constitutional reform only with the consensus of all three ethnic groups. President Tadic issued a statement noting Serbia's role as guarantor of the Dayton Agreement while reaffirming Belgrade's "principled and unambiguous" commitment to Bosnia's territorial integrity. Prime Minister Mirko Cvetkovic echoed these sentiments, adding that Serbia respected completely Bosnia's sovereignty and the principle that every major agreement required consensus among the three ethnic groups. Cvetkovic noted that Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia enjoyed "very good cooperation" in the realms of energy, tourism, and railroad infrastructure. Deputy Prime Minister Bozidar Djelic and Inzko discussed European integration and regional cooperation issues, agreeing to consider joint projects in the energy, agriculture, and travel infrastructure sectors, according to a statement from Djelic's office.

14. (C) Foreign Ministry officials voiced satisfaction with the meetings and expressed Serbia's willingness to work constructively with the High Representative. Nikola Rukic, an official in the MFA's European Integration office who participated in the Inzko meetings, told us that Inzko approached Zagreb and Belgrade to seek their support in encouraging BiH leaders to strengthen Bosnia's state-level institutions, calm nationalist rhetoric from Bosnia's leaders, and make greater efforts to achieve reconciliation among the three ethnic groups. While downplaying the significance of Bosnian Republika Srpska (RS) PM Milorad Dodik's nationalist rhetoric and threats of secession ("He is only a politician, not a nationalist"), Rukic said that Belgrade supported strengthening Bosnia's central institutions and that Inzko could rely on Serbia's unconditional support in this regard because only strong central institutions would enable Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve EU membership. Rukic added that Inzko praised Serbia's support of Dayton and encouraged Belgrade to offer more assistance to central institutions.

#### Little Progress on Bilateral Sticking Points

15. (C) Despite the positive rhetoric and Serbian promises, Inzko's visit did not result in any concrete changes in policy nor dislodge longstanding obstacles to developing state-to-state relations between Belgrade and Sarajevo. Bosnian Charge Amira Arifovic-Harms told us on May 11 that Inzko's visit was a charm offensive directed toward skeptical Serbs; it would not result in substantive pressure from OHR on Belgrade. (Comment: While Inzko clearly sought to highlight in interviews personal ties to Belgrade stemming from his diplomatic service here in the 1980s, it is unclear

whether the "charm offensive" was successful. One MFA contact, noting that Inzko is Slovenian by origin, told us that whatever pro-Serbian sentiments Inzko may have would be obviated by the demands of his office. End Comment.) Arifovic-Harms said that negotiations on longstanding border disputes (reftel) remain stalled since December and proposed

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talks on property succession issues this spring were repeatedly postponed. She voiced disappointment that Inzko's visit to Belgrade was not coordinated with the Bosnian Embassy, in contrast to the practices of previous High Reps.

¶6. (C) MFA Neighboring Countries Directorate official Vladimir Odavic downplayed the significance of stalled border and property talks and emphatically said that Belgrade was striving to bolster relations with the Bosniak-Croat Federation. Odavic claimed that border disputes were ongoing because Serbia sought to negotiate a comprehensive solution to problems involving Serbian-built, Yugoslav-era hydroelectric dams on the border, while the Bosnians insisted on drawing administrative lines before further negotiation. Odavic ascribed the delayed property succession talks to the Easter holidays and said that the Serbian side had yet to receive a comprehensive list of Bosnian property claims. Regarding state-level relations, Odavic repeated the familiar refrain that Belgrade actively sought additional state-to-state contacts but was rebuffed by Silajdzic's associates. Odavic said that one solution to overcoming strained relations was via economic issues, and he proudly pointed to the March 4 "Economic Forum of Serbia and BiH" in Belgrade as an example of how both sides could work together on economic issues. The economic forum --organized under the auspices of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and the Bosnian Embassy \*- focused on increasing economic cooperation between Serbia and the Federation, and included state secretary-level representation from the Serbian and Bosnian Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

Comment

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¶7. (C) High Representative Inzko's visit to Belgrade yielded few surprises and again demonstrated that top Serbian officials believe that voicing support for Bosnia's territorial integrity excuses the de facto emphasis on entity-level relations and occasional unconstructive rhetoric partial to Dodik. While the alleged agreement to Inzko's proposal that Serbia support strengthening Bosnia's central institutions is encouraging, we are skeptical there is much intention in following through with more than just words. Tadic met on May 25 with Bosnian Serb tri Presidency member Nebojsa Radmanovic in Belgrade and Bosnian-Croat tri-Presidency member Zeljko Komsic will visit Novi Sad in mid June. The Serbian government's reactions to these visits by top Bosnia officials will provide the first clue as to whether the visits by Inzko and Vice President Biden will have prompted President Tadic to assume a more constructive position toward Bosnia and Herzegovina in which the substance of bilateral relations matches his rhetoric. A good start would be for Tadic to increase his interaction with the tri-presidency members and pay a visit to Sarajevo to meet with state-level politicians of all three ethnic groups, thereby expressing Serbia's support for Bosnia's state-level institutions. It would also be helpful if Tadic publicly endorsed any U.S.-backed constitutional reform initiative in BiH, and at the same time, signaled clearly and publicly to Dodik and the RS public that while Belgrade was prepared to support the RS's territorial integrity (as Biden did in Sarajevo), it would not back attempts by the RS to avoid or block the constitutional compromises necessary to create a functional and efficient Bosnian state. Tadic is notoriously hesitant to tackle hard topics that he thinks will backfire by increasing reaction by the Radical-led Greater Serbia elements. He needs to also be confident that any move he

makes in this direction will be noted by the United States and Europe and that his statesman-like image will be enhanced by playing a constructive role in the region. End Comment.  
MUNTER